DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 984 CE 071 176

TITLE	What We Want Our Children to Get out of School. A Community Discussion Guide [and] Action for Children's Education.
INSTITUTION	Alameda County Library System, Hayward, Calif.; Santa Clara County Library, San Jose, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	15p.; For a related document, see CE 071 175.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Community Involvement; Decision Making; Parent Influence; *Parent Participation; *Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; *School Community Relationship

ABSTRACT

Two guides for parents and others concerned with the education of children in their community are provided in this packet. "What We Want Our Children to Get Out of School" is a community discussion guide modeled from National Issues Forum material that provides the framework and setting for adults to share their views. It begins with information on three choices the community can make about what is most important for children to learn: basic skills, learning skills, or social skills. Each choice is discussed in terms of what should be done, likes, and concerns. Compiled by adult learners, "Action for Children's Education" is a guide to assist parents following their participation in a forum on education. It provides suggestions on visiting the child's school and steps to take if a parent has a concern about the child's school. (YLB)

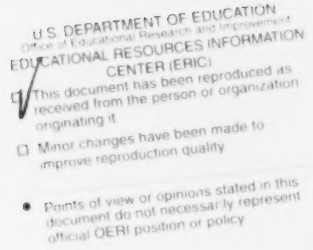
****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 392 984

What We Want Our Children to Get Out of School

and

Action for Children's Education


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CE071176

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Community Discussion Guide

What we need to decide:

Of all the things we want our children to learn, which ones should be taught at school?

Since schools cannot do everything, we need to make some choices about what is most important.

Here are 3 choices. Which one do you agree with the most?

Choice 1.

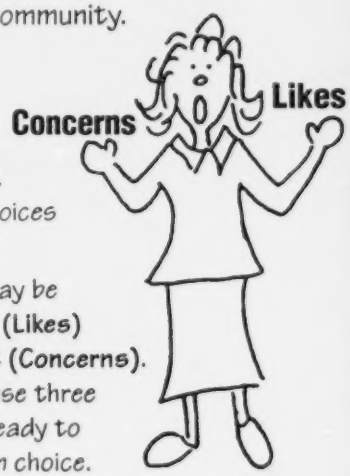
Basic Skills: Every student should learn the same basic reading, writing and math skills.

Choice 2.

Learning Skills: Every student should learn *how* to learn by developing their own talents.

Choice 3.

Social Skills: Every student should learn how to get along with others in their school and their community.



Each choice has a plan of action called **What should be done.** Talk about these 3 choices with other people.

For each one, there may be things you agree with **(Likes)** and things you do not **(Concerns).** After you discuss these three choices, you may be ready to come up with your own choice.

Choice 1. Basic Skills

What should be done

- Teach the same basic reading, writing, and math skills to every child at every school.
- Test all students to make sure they really learn these basics. Do not pass them on to the next grade until they are ready.
- Teach all kids together. Get rid of "special" classes that can label students as slow or hard to teach.

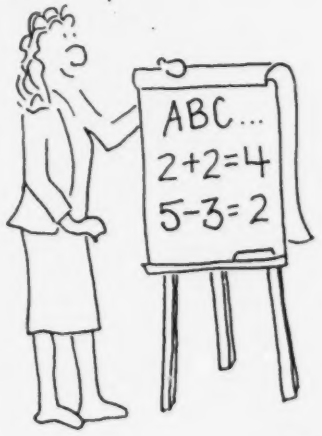
Likes:

- All kids will get the basics. They will feel better about themselves and learn other subjects more easily.
- This will force the teachers to work with all students, not just the ones that are easy to teach.

Concerns:

- Not all kids learn the same way and some are more ready to learn than others. Teachers need to change how they teach based on each student's needs.
- Kids will just memorize things to pass the test and forget them after. They will not learn for the love of learning.

Knowing how to read, write, and do math is the most important thing kids can learn in school.



Choice 2. Learning Skills

What kids need most from school is to learn how to learn so they can help teach themselves.

4

What should be done:

- Focus on each student's individual strengths and let them help choose what they learn.
- Let teachers choose different ways to teach different students based on their learning styles.
- Group students based on what they like and what they are good at.

Likes:

- Teachers can change how they teach to match each student's needs. One size does not fit all.
- Students will be more interested in school. After they succeed with something they choose to learn, they may try something that is harder.

Concerns:

- Teachers do not have enough time to create a separate plan for each student. They need some clear standard measures.
- Students are too young to make these choices. They need basic skills first. They also need to learn how to get along with others who learn different ways than they do.

Choice 3: Social Skills

What should be done:

- Teach kids how to get along with other kids who come from different backgrounds.
- Have students work in teams on projects. They will need to know how to do this for work.
- Give students projects in the community that will teach them how to be responsible.

Learning how to get along with others and be responsible is what kids have to know for the real world.

Likes:

- If kids get along better, there will be less crime and more learning in the schools. Schools need to be made safe again.
- Kids need to learn that they have responsibilities too. Many parents can use some help in teaching this.

Concerns:

- It is the parent's job to teach these social skills, not the school's. Schools should not be asked to fix all the problems in the community.
- A lot of the violence and fighting at schools is because kids don't know the basics. That will help them get along better than anything else.

Deciding for your community:

No one choice is the answer. It may be part of all three choices. But we know that our schools cannot do everything for everybody.

You and others in your community need to make choices about what our kids should learn in school..

- What do you think is most important?
- What is the fairest plan for all students?
- What is best for your whole community?

6

Our Choice

What *we* think should be done:

-
-
-

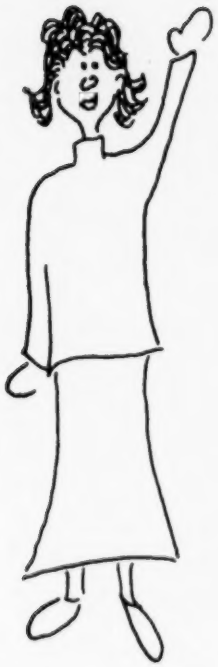
Likes:

-
-

Concerns:

-
-

This discussion is sponsored by:



Special thanks to the following adult learners who helped put this discussion guide together: Sherries Oakmon, Ray Moreno and Emma Torrez. Key to Community project coordinator: Mara Wold; project consultant: Susan Clark.

This guide was based on material from National Issues Forums, a group that believes the public should be a part of public policy. NIF does not have a point of view about this issue. They just want people to talk together, listen to each other, and come up with a direction everyone can live with. For more information about NIF, call 1-800-433-7834.

This guide was also supported in part by the United States Department of Education under the provisions of the Library Services and Construction Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.
© The Santa Clara County Library Reading Program.

ACTION FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

VISIT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

CHILDREN NEED ADULTS TO LOOK OUT FOR THEIR INTERESTS!

You need to know what's happening in school, to make sure it works for your child. The teacher needs to know that you will be involved with your child's education. And your child needs to know that you are part of their school life, too.

Set up a good relationship with your child's teacher. Together, you can help your child love learning.

CONTACT THE TEACHER

To set up a classroom visit, send the teacher a note. If you need help in writing, ask a friend to help. In your note, tell the teacher what day and time you would like to visit. Give them your phone number. They can call you if that's not a good day.

When you get to school, go into the office and let them know you're visiting your child's classroom.

HOW TO GET READY FOR A CLASSROOM VISIT

Ask your child about school. Is there anything they wish you'd talk to the teacher about?

Let your child know that you'll be visiting, and that they need to be part of the regular class while you're there.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE CLASSROOM?

Here are some ideas of things to look for during your visit:

- How does the teacher act with the children?
- How does the teacher handle problems?
- What are the other kids like?
- Do you see peer pressure?

We hope that you will offer to help out in the classroom, too. Maybe you can talk to the class or read a story to the children while you're there.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THE TEACHER?

Write down your questions first. Here are some ideas of questions to ask:

- How can you help your child?
- In what areas is your child doing well?
- What parts of school are hard for your child?
- What do you need to know about school rules?

Remember that the teacher is busy with the children, and can't spend much time talking with you. If you want more time, you can plan to talk to the teacher before or after school.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

School districts served by the
Alameda County Library Adult Literacy Program

Fremont Unified School District
District Office: 4210 Technology Drive, Fremont CA 94538
Phone: 657-2350 Superintendent: Sharon Belshaw-Jones, 659-2542
School Board Meetings: second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7:00 pm in the City Government Building, 39700 Civic Center Drive, Fremont

Castro Valley Unified School District
District Office: 4400 Alma Avenue, Castro Valley CA 94546
Phone: 537-3000 Superintendent: Robert J. Fisher, 537-3000
School Board Meetings: second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 7:30 pm in the District Office, Castro Valley

Dublin Unified School District
District Office: 7471 Larkdale Avenue, Dublin CA 94568
Phone: 828-2551 Superintendent: Vince Anaclerio, 828-2551 x231
School Board Meetings: first and third Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 pm in the District Office, Dublin

New Haven Unified School District (Union City)
District Office: 34200 Alvarado Niles Road, Union City 94587
Phone: 471-1100 Superintendent: Guy Emanuele, 471-1100 x2002
School Board Meetings: first and third Tuesdays of each month at 8:00 pm in the District Office, Union City

Newark Unified School District
District Office: 5715 Musick Avenue, Newark CA 94560
Phone: 794-2141 Superintendent: Gerald K. Trout, 794-2121 x112
School Board Meetings: first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 pm in the District Office, Newark

Pleasanton Unified School District
District Office: 4665 Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton CA 94566
Phone: 462-5500 Superintendent: Bill J. James, 462-5500
School Board Meetings: second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 pm in the District Office, Pleasanton

San Lorenzo Unified School District
District Office: 15510 Usher Street, San Lorenzo 94580
Phone: 481-4600 Superintendent: Janis A. Duran, 481-4600 x214
School Board Meetings: first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 pm in the District Office, San Lorenzo

WHAT IS A.C.E.?

We are students in the Adult Literacy Program at the Alameda County Library. We created our Action for Children's Education (A.C.E.) group to help adults get involved in children's education. We know what doesn't work in schools—most of us went through the school system, and now we're adults working on learning to read and write better. We know what does work in education, because we're succeeding in learning now.

"I know parent involvement is the key to kids' learning and I didn't have that when I was young. I'm giving that to my grandchildren now. I see how much it means to a child for parents to care about what they are learning and to get extra help if the child needs it.

" In A.C.E., we especially want to reach other people in literacy programs. We want to show them we all can make a change in children's lives. Even if school didn't work out for us when we were kids, we can go back into the schools now and help today's kids."

Darlene Garcia

"I graduated from high school in Fremont, class of 1982, and I could barely read and write by the time I graduated. From my own experience I know it's so important for parents to know what's going on in school, so they can help. And it's important to let kids know 'It's okay to make mistakes.' All of us make mistakes and that's fine. We learn from them and move on.

"My daughter Olivia is 3 1/2 years old and she is the best thing in my life. I will be involved in her education."

Cindy Goin

"I lost all those years of school because I didn't know how to read or write. The mistakes I made in my schooling I can now put to good use for others to benefit from. I can see what other parents don't see: kids doing the same things I did when I went to school. Some kids play hookey, some kids don't learn in school. Parents have to get in there and be part of their kids' school. They have to know what's going on."

Jorge Lopez

"English is my second language. With the literacy program I have learned how to talk again, and to read and write. I was able to write to my children's teachers, to ask questions about anything I was concerned about. I'm proud to say that I've found the doors wide open that lead to success. This is what I would like children to have. Education is the most valuable tool you can give to your child.

"Parents! We hope that you take our message and use it. It will change a child's life."

Bertha Van Dusen

STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Act as soon as a problem comes up. If you have a concern, the school should hear from you.

Here are our ideas about what you can do. Your school district may suggest other steps. Give them a call to find out.

TALK TO THE TEACHER

Teachers should know and care about each child.

To set up a meeting to talk about your concern, send the teacher a note. Ask them to call you to set up a time to meet. You can meet in person or talk on the phone. Remember, it's hard for teachers to make calls during the school day.

Before the meeting, plan what you want to say. It is fine to take a friend along with you. When you talk with the teacher, always think about what's best for your child.

Remember to say "thanks" for the good things going on in the classroom!

WRITE OR CALL THE PRINCIPAL AND ASK FOR A MEETING

If you still have a concern after you talk with the teacher, the principal is the next step.

The principal is the teacher's boss. It is up to the principal to make sure that the school serves every child.

Write down your concern and send it to the principal, or call and speak to them. Ask for a meeting, in person or on the phone. It is fine to take a friend with you when you talk to the principal.

WRITE OR CALL THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

If you still have a concern, you can write or call the School Superintendent from your school district. The Superintendent is the chief of the whole school district.

WRITE OR CALL THE SCHOOL BOARD

If you still have a concern, you can write or call the School Board. People on the School Board are elected by voters in the school district. They oversee what is taught in the schools and oversee the money. They hire the Superintendent.

The School Board may ask you to come to a meeting to talk about your problem. School Board meetings are open to the public.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT A.C.E.

call the Alameda County Library Adult Literacy Program
at (510) 745-1488.
Adults, if you need help with reading & writing you can be tutored ***F R E E*** at your local library.

This brochure is part of the Key to Community Voter Involvement program. The project was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education under the provisions of the Library Services and Construction Act administered in California by the State Librarian.

Written by Darlene Garcia, Cindy Goin, Jorge Lopez
& Bertha Van Dusen.
Coordinated by Pam Nicholls.
Design by Alameda County Library—Graphics, Christina Knapp.
Please recycle. 5/95